

## **The Modern Fire Service**

Two hundred years of tradition  
unimpeded by progress?



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“If you want to make enemies, try  
to change something.”

— Woodrow Wilson

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## **Effective Collaboration Between Employers and Unions**

**Tom Hanify**

President of the Professional Fire Fighters Union of Indiana



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## Goals of presentation:

- Understand the cooperative process.
- Understand the benefits of a cooperative process.
- Obtain a few of the tools to start productive communications.

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## Roadblocks and Potential Solutions

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## What UNIONS do to create roadblocks

- Inflexible at times
- Demanding
- Not open to change
- Distrustful
- Try to win at all costs —  
Win/Lose philosophy
- Unwilling to forget or forgive mistakes

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- Often insensitive to the pressures that come to bear on the Chief
- Not following through on what we agree to do (sometimes over committed)
- Make a mountain out of a mole hill to sabotage an idea
- Sometimes impatient
- Don't listen to/or get all the facts

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- Sometimes intentionally disruptive
- Failure to leave old baggage behind
- Don't always do a good job of communicating with administrative staff
- Sometimes we don't like to take the heat from membership
- Sometimes we take ourselves too seriously

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### **What CHIEFS do to create roadblocks**

- Cannot let the past go
- Find it hard to let go of the power
- Lack of commitment to contemporary labor management process
- Passing the buck
- Suspicious of the union  
(believe there is a hidden agenda)

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- Assume labor has all the information therefore they don't work to communicate
- Lack of consideration for meeting times
- Chiefs allow the elected officials to steer their agenda in spite of previous agreements with the local
- Allow outside politics to influence their decisions rather than good practices

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## **Solutions**

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**Meet with your counterpart and establish**

### **Ground Rules**

***Suggested ground rules:***

- Treat each other as peers.
- Don't get personal.
- Agree to disagree but don't be disagreeable.

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- Lighten up.
- No hiding.
- All things are relative ...  
no right, no wrong.
- Everybody must be willing to be candid.
- Must be able to substantiate.

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#### Ground Rules Continued

- No lies, no surprises and talk at least once a week
- Need to take the cooperative leadership workshop message home so everyone is aware of the mission
- Act like you trust each other and see what happens – regardless of the past
- Greater understanding of each others role and job

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- Communicate, Communicate, Communicate
- Make sure all parties are identified and included in the process
- Establish ground rules for working together with time lines if possible
- Don't let one issue define the relationship
- Once you come to a decision own it

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- Don't keep score
- Obtain buy-in from external stakeholders
- Leave the option of re-evaluating decisions in the future
- Have realistic expectations of your counterpart
- If the answer is "no" say it quickly – don't beat around the bush

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## **Meet and Confer Legislation Passed in the 2007 Indiana General Assembly**




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### Meet and Confer Summary

(A) A municipality shall recognize full-time firefighters or police officers employed by the municipality for the purpose of meeting and conferring on labor related issues if such public safety officers are:

- (1) organized into a labor organization or association; and
- (2) demonstrate that sixty-six percent (66%) of its full-time firefighters or police officers are members of the labor organization or association.

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(B) If a labor organization or association is recognized by a municipality pursuant to Subsection (a), the municipality shall, upon the written request of each member of the organization, deduct dues the member's regular pay check and continue to deduct such dues until the member submits a written request to stop the dues deductions. The dues deducted shall be forwarded to the Treasurer of the recognized organization in a manner agree to by the parties.

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(C) Full-time firefighters or police officers of a municipality shall not be required to join any labor organization or association or pay dues.

(D) The municipality shall meet and confer in good faith with the recognized labor organization or association at least once (1) per calendar year regarding issues related to:

- (1) firefighter or police officers safety;
- (2) salary and benefits; and
- (3) working conditions.

(E) Such a meeting shall take place within sixty (60) days of the calendar year the recognized labor organization or association submits a written request and tentative agenda to the leadership of the municipality. Within thirty (30) days after receipt of the written request and tentative agenda, the municipality shall submit its tentative agenda to the labor organization or association.

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(F) Neither the municipality nor the labor organization or association is required to make binding agreements. They are required to consider, in good faith, each other's concerns and requests regarding the issues outlined in Subsection (b).

(G) However, if the parties choose to make a binding agreement, such agreement shall be reduced to writing and shall be considered a contract governed by the rules Indiana common law.

(H) Nothing in this Section shall be construed to limit the number of times the parties can meet and confer or limit the ability of a municipality to recognize, or make binding agreements with, police and fire labor organizations with less than sixty-six (66%) membership. However, a binding agreement that recognizes an organization or association as the sole and exclusive bargaining agent for all the members of a department may only be executed with an organization or association with at least fifty-one percent (51%) of the members of the department.

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## How a Bill Becomes a Law

And

Thinking in the Long-Term



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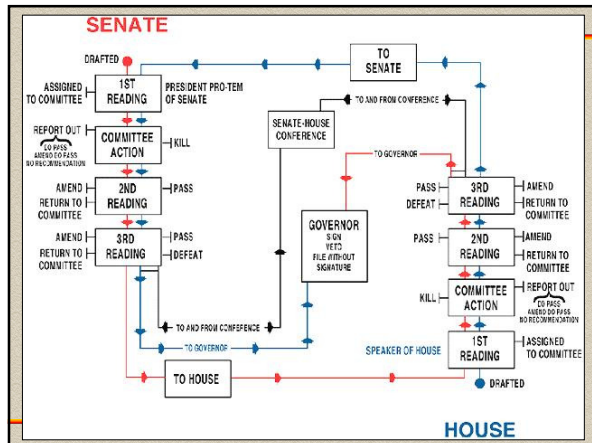
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## Legislation that passed due to patience and perseverance

- Drop Plan
- Meet and Confer
- Heart, Lung, and Cancer
- Pension Relief
- Pension Age moved to 52

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**What is one of the most important issues the career Indiana Fire Chiefs Association would like to see addressed at the Indiana General Assembly and how do we get there?**

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**Answer: Pension based on last three years of fire service.**

**How do we get there?**

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Introduced Version

**SENATE BILL No. 74**

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DIGEST OF INTRODUCED BILL

Citations Affected: IC 36-8-3.5.

Synopsis: Police and firefighter merit systems. Requires all cities, towns, and townships that have full-time paid police or fire departments to use the statutory merit system or establish their own merit system for their police and fire departments not later than July 1, 2010.

Effective: July 1, 2008.

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January 8, 2008, read first time and referred to Committee on Local Government and Elections.

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